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ABSTRACT

In this essay, women outdoor leaders discuss how gender influences their work, and explore and challenge some assumptions underlying outdoor leadership that continue to privilege the impartial, disembodied practices typified by the masculine outdoor leader. Four feminist, and three other feminist outdoor leaders participated in personal interviews focusing on how their feminist beliefs affected their professional practice. The results indicate that a commitment to feminism affects their work as leaders because they do not separate themselves from their practice as instructors. Overall, these women understand their commitment to feminism as a process of learning how they developed a sense of self as women, and of responding to the conflicting ways in which gender continues to organize and inform their identity and leadership through intersecting power relations. At times the women in the study appear to feel strong and clear, perhaps seeing themselves as positive, nontraditional role models; at other times, they appear to be hurt by judgments made by students or colleagues. The lived realities of being a woman in the outdoors are expressed in terms of desire for "self": seeing women getting in touch with their strength, questioning what being a woman means, locating their sense of self, and finally "unpacking" their experience. Contains 43 references. (TD)

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Feminists Challenging Assumptions about Outdoor Leadership

Martha Bell

> Some really destructive assumptions operate in groups when stress is involved. People are going to want to silence others. Especially when we are trying to operate in a consensus decision model when underlying power relationships aren't being named. We talk about challenge in Outward Bound, we talk about adventure. That's the greatest adventure: challenging assumptions. Better than challenging lives. 'Cause those assumptions are just like rocks; they're bedrock.[1]

Much of the essence of experiential learning in the outdoors rests on the effective facilitation of personal growth through reflection. As experiential practices have developed, educators have gained unique insight into the experiences and needs of different groups as they synthesise new awareness toward social consciousness, groups of women among others. My interest is not only in women's experiences as participants learning in the outdoors, but also in women as experiential facilitators and instructors. One of the earliest studies of women-only wilderness courses recommended that future research examine the effects of women's outdoor learning on the development of feminist consciousness (Hardin, 1979). Conversely, I believe that it is also important to examine the effects of feminist consciousness on the professional lives of women who lead outdoor experiences.

I write as a feminist, an outdoor facilitator and guide, and now a lecturer and researcher in higher education. Starting from my own experience, I began to pursue the issues raised here when they affected my everyday reality as an instructor; later I gained a language in which to think about them through reading in graduate school in a combination of academic disciplines.[2] In this chapter, I discuss a number of themes which emerged through individual and group interviews with four Canadian women (Bell, 1993). Three women agreed to join me in a qualitative research study, in which I served as participant-researcher, aimed at finding out how our

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feminist beliefs affect our professional practice, thereby enhancing our collective ability to forge new awareness through personal reflection.

The study[3] indicates that a commitment to feminism in the lives of the women interviewed does affect their daily work as leaders as they do not separate themselves, or their life stories as women, from their practice as instructors. Overall, a commitment to feminism is understood by these women as a process of both learning about ways that they developed a sense of self, capability, and relationships as girls and women, and responding to awareness of how gender continues to organise and inform that identity and their leadership, in perhaps conflicting ways, through intersecting power relations. Gender is the categorical lens through which social relations become viewed and judged as regulating or empowering.

Firstly, therefore, discussing feminism involves context: working from personal histories of difference, determination, and desire, deeply ingrained while sometimes also shared. Identity is shown to be multiple at any one time, such as when a woman is employed to be an instructor and lives in the outdoor program community in which she takes on other leadership positions and has relationships based on diverse affinities and interests. Contexts shift and identities may shift in turn. The relevance to experiential education of the socio-cultural concept of identity as social subjectivities[4] will emerge with the voices of the women who participated in the study.

Secondly, feminist beliefs also involve analysis: thinking about the wider social organisation of oppression as experienced by women and seeing it reproduced in social relations and cultural practices,[5] in outdoor learning groups as much as in other groups in society. The interviews were consciousness raising, a feminist strategy for politicising personal experience, as we became more conscious of our own life stories and the identities they produced. The focus was also on *praxis*, or reflecting on past action in order to theorise to inform future action. As with feminism, praxis also has social change as its goal. Socially meaningful change means identifying and disrupting assumptions about gender difference, group conflict, and social relations in experiential practice inherited from dominant perspectives in outdoor leadership, education, and theories of knowledge. I hope the voices in this study will provoke feminist women to extend their theorising about their own leadership in future group facilitation in the outdoors beyond their individual situation and into a socio-cultural context. In the next section, I introduce readers to the analytical concepts grounding these insights and what they signal for all critical outdoor leaders.

Outdoor Leadership: Gendered Terrain

Imagine a summer camp for girls in which the camp leaders were openly feminist. It does exist. The Iowa Girls' Leadership Camp, according to Deb Jordan (1988), teaches young women leadership values, skills, and knowledge through the

outdoors. A diverse group of women, including women of colour, Third World women, and women of European descent are instructors, speakers, and mentors. The young women participants are encouraged to reflect on their lives and goals, growing up as girls in society, and their experiences in their groups in camp. They are encouraged to perceive how the structural influence of gender impacts each of their lives, even in differing ways, and to analyse their experiences as a collective gender group. As an example, "women's and men's roles in society, their relationships . . . in a variety of settings, and the strengths and weaknesses of both genders" are discussed during the camp. The aim is to help "open the eyes and hearts of future leaders to the struggles and needs of oppressed groups," concludes Jordan (1988, p. 32). From personal experience to awareness of oppression to leadership for social change; this is a clear example of experiential learning in action. I immediately want to know more about what motivates the women leaders at this camp. What vision do they have for tomorrow's women leaders? Do they always agree? How do they express differences? How do they apply their feminist beliefs in practice—both as feminist practices and experiential practices in facilitation?

Before turning to questions such as these, I want to emphasize the significance of the notion of social practices. The notion that we each choose certain social roles to adopt and learn is most often applied to explanations of the identities of men and women and their respective preferences for their actions and abilities in the outdoors (e.g., see Jordan, 1992; Nolan & Priest, 1993). This approach, sociologists like Bob Connell (1987) argue, misconstrues biological anatomy of male and female as the source of culturally constituted, or moulded, masculine and feminine behaviours. The so-called natural sex categories are expected to differentiate and naturalise the socially defined gender categories. In contrast, Connell presents gendered behaviour as ideas about gender that are practiced, and he proposes that we see gender identity as a practical accomplishment (Cornell, 1987, p. 76).[6]

The theme for this chapter, then, is that a socio-cultural approach to examining our practice in the outdoors contests the notion that anyone practices leadership—or feminism—as a generic role, abstracted from the cultural context and the influence of social structures. Rather than as single theoretical perspectives, leadership and feminism could productively be explored as sets of varied practices, employed to accomplish their political possibilities self-reflexively. The facilitation of social consciousness in both experiential processes and feminism take each person's and group's own experience as the starting point for unpacking the pack of privilege and social regulation (McIntosh, 1990; Warren & Rheingold, 1993).

Before I proceed with a closer look at what specific feminist beliefs might look like in practice in the outdoors, I want to examine the overriding theoretical perspective about outdoor leadership and group facilitation. Composite theories of outdoor leadership skills, competencies, and style choices articulate them as objective behaviours determined by principles affecting all people equally (e.g., Phipps, 1991; Priest & Chase, 1989; Swiderski, 1987). Theorists propose that all leaders employ objective

knowledge and skills requiring rational and logical actions to guarantee the safety of their students. Some detail the procedure for exercising judgment on behalf of others (Ewert, 1988; Priest, 1988; Cain, 1991), a process which is elsewhere simply reduced to "the ability to understand, compare and decide between alternative forces" (Swiderski, 1987, p. 32). The danger of these conceptions of outdoor leadership is that they uncritically conflate authority with forms and degrees of the activity of decision making, that is, making either/or judgments on the basis of mutual exclusion. Hence, ability becomes power in the practice of making judgments and speaking for others. "Astuteness" is thought to determine the ability to make "correct" decisions guaranteeing safe risk taking (Priest & Baillie, 1987), but is astuteness an ability? A trait? What are correct decisions for the girls who have been encouraged to encompass each others' different backgrounds and life experiences in a social analysis at the Iowa Girls' Leadership Camp? How might astuteness allow for decisions to acknowledge cultural diversity? Surely alternate forces are not simply equal in impact, but must be interpreted through cultural lenses as value judgments privileging some at the expense of others.

Thinly veiled is the gendered, race-based organisation of the subjectivity of the leader, such that it is European, able-bodied, autonomous, objective, and rational men who are predisposed to make sound decisions and be natural leaders (Williams, 1993). Deb Jordan (1992) critiques the early trait theories of leadership for establishing the common expectation that good leaders are those who act rationally and objectively, in contrast to women who have historically been labelled irrational, emotional, subjective, and embodied. Although we know many exceptions to the norm, contends Jordan (1992), "many of us maintain a subtle, powerful belief in" it nevertheless (p. 61). Central to this chapter's concerns then, is the question of what moulds and shapes ideas such as astuteness as such powerful, outdoor leadership norms?

In the discussion to follow, four women outdoor leaders speak about their personal experiences. An explanation of the contribution of personal experience to the process of developing sound judgment is the crucial omission in the work of Priest and Chase (1989). While experience is at the centre of Freirian and Deweyan explanations of experiential learning and praxis, once leadership is dissected into its components and disassociated from social contexts, the constitution of the practice is invisible. In order for social change to occur, the cultural constitution of such practices as based in *someone's* lived experience must be made explicit. If decision making is personal, then, as it must be if a leader is to base his or her judgment on an assessment of past experiences, then it must be subjective by definition. Yet, leadership experience is treated in outdoor leadership writing as objective, abstract, and cumulative. Most outdoor leadership theorists ignore the contradiction in the positioning of the subject of the decision making outside the decision made (e.g., Langmuir, 1984; Mortlock, 1984; Priest, 1988; Priest & Chase, 1989). The person responsible is taken for granted as not relevant. The subjectivity of the leader as not

relevant to specific situations is accomplished through the practice of abstracting that person with their own personal and social history from the context of the situation and its requisite decision.

A person's experience brings local, contextual, and tacit or embodied knowledge to any situation (Bannerji, 1991, p. 96). However, localised, incomplete, and partial knowledge is judged naive, illegitimate, and not common sense (Foucault, 1980, p. 82). In this context, the notion of experience as constitutive of knowledge is a key site for feminist interventions to highlight differences in women's experiences compared to men's and how knowledge is constructed as a result. Indeed, "the recent feminist movement began with the politics of the personal, challenging the unified, apparently ungendered individual . . . and suggesting that, in its gender blindness, liberal humanism masks structures of male privilege and domination" (Weedon, 1987, p. 41). Universalising masculine traits, such as the exercise of reason, logic, and objectivity as astuteness, and treating feminine traits, such as "nurturing, caring, community and wholeness" as part of the natural "closeness of women and nature," as do Nolan and Priest (1993), perpetuate the dualistic thinking of liberal humanism. Relations of domination continue to privilege the impartial, disembodied practices typified by the masculine outdoor leader.

Women in Outdoor Leadership

Interestingly, some research into women in outdoor leadership does bear out this epistemological critique. Jordan's 1991 study finds that students have role expectations that are gendered and concludes that this gender bias disadvantages women leaders. Attention is also being given to men and women in what is called traditional outdoor leadership to reframe this perspective such that gender identity amongst participants is taken into account by all leaders (Jordan, 1992; Joyce, 1988; Mitten, 1992; Miranda & Yerkes, 1982; Warren, 1990b). New workshops in women's leadership for women in the outdoors have produced models of feminist and interactive leadership (Bialeschki, 1991; Mitten, 1991, 1990, 1986; Warren, 1990a). So far, however, none of these writers calls for a feminist consciousness in all staff. Nevertheless, one such view has emerged within an Outward Bound community, following a study of the theoretical foundations of the Outward Bound movement, and recommending:

> First, that in making explicit the wisdom of its tradition, and in developing the implications for subsequent practice, Outward Bound should ensure that women of the community, past and present, have a voice. Second, that in undertaking critical social analysis, Outward Bound take heed of feminist critiques. Third, and last, that in cultivating the healthy growth and development of its tradition, Outward Bound ask whether it is a hospitable environment for participation of women at all levels of the organization, and if not, what changes might be made to become so. (Vokey, 1987, p. 51)

Perhaps significantly, all four women in my Canadian interviews had worked at the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School in their career. Using the interviews to ensure that "women of the community, past and present, have a voice" became important to me. According to a former woman program manager, the School has "made some great strides" toward the practical reality of feminist change since that critical document was published.

> As a community, we have begun some hard work on issues of sexist oppression. We have begun addressing "gender issues" on some courses, dependent largely on instructor capability. There is a strong lesbian community... [and] there are some men who are willing to take some risks in confronting sexism and supporting radical staff members. (Goldman, 1990, p. 21)

Ensuring That Women of the Community Have a Voice

This group of four Canadian women feel that to have a voice means to exercise self-representation from our own knowledge and experience, resisting hegemonic social definitions, such as our "shared cycles" (Nolan & Priest, 1993, p. 14). Terry, Diane, Moon, and I were four white, educated, able-bodied women, two lesbian, one straight, and one transidentified, between the ages of 32 and 37. Two women were in relationships, two women worked full-time, and one owned her own home. One of us had completed a master's degree, while the other three were working toward master's degrees, all in Education Theory at the same graduate school. I participated as a member of the research, including my comments and reflections for textual analysis, in order to preclude any pretext of impartiality. Self-representation to us encompasses talking to co-instructors and co-facilitators about being women in our particular[7] situation and being women leaders, making a plan to deal with gender and other social issues, challenging assumptions about women and social relations, calling inappropriate behaviour, questioning experiences, facilitating space for naming what just happened, learning with and from other women, knowing that how we want to represent ourselves is known—despite opposition, ostracism, and, at times, humiliation. Our collaboration gave us the rare opportunity to compare differences of experience and interpretation. As bell hooks (1988) writes, "to speak as an act of resistance is quite different than ordinary talk, or the personal confession that has no relation to coming into political awareness, to developing critical consciousness" (p. 14).

Practising a Process[8]

Terry's feminism is based on "pretty strong views around what women should be able to do and what women's rights should be." She sees herself as a "really strong, capable woman" and she is concerned that there be a safe and empowering

space for other women finding, claiming, and developing their strength. "It's really, really wonderful for me to see women getting in touch with their strength," she explains. She wants them to see that they are not limited by gender roles.

> I think the best example of this was when I worked with a male instructor. We deliberately set out to destroy all those little gender myths . . . he taught cooking, and I taught portaging, and I carried the canoe when we taught portaging, and he carried the packs, and we would trade around each time. . . . And just continually role modelled that strength of women and that nurturing and supporting of men. The group really got into that; most of them identified that as the first time that they'd seen that.

Terry explains the importance of the outdoors as the context for such a practical self-reliance to her feminism. "I just love being up here in this incredibly beautiful wilderness environment. I like to share that with people. That's a real close-to-the-heart thing for me," she says. If a woman wants to experience "the sheer physicalness of it," then she must portage the heavy food packs or canoes for her travel in it. This means relying on her body and her own strength. To Terry, being capable and in control means she is responsible for her own safety. In her relationships with her co-instructors and her students she likes to plan what she will do at all times in a situation, while ensuring safety for others "to try new things" as her primary responsibility. The natural environment draws her to outdoor work even though its unpredictability seems to confront her desire for control.

Diane sees her feminism as reaction to injustice, after watching her mother cope with being virtually an independent parent, with no choice but to accept that responsibility within her marriage. Finding challenges, risks, and self-reliance is how Diane characterises her feminism. It is also part of her adventure base, the reason she instructs in the outdoors. " [I don't] put away my beliefs" during instructing, she says. "If someone's not being heard or issues are not being brought up—it depends on the group—[if there are] dynamics in the group of how women and men relate to each other," she says, "I'll bring it up" as an issue to process. She sees attention to process as the most important aspect of her work at Outward Bound and as a facilitator with college students; it is the foundation to experiential learning, self-understanding, *and* a feminist practice. She points to the politics of voice in exploring her own approach to facilitating change. "First thing is awakening, is awareness and awakening. And then you can name it. And *then* you can go into a process."

"One of the key things of my feminism," says Moon, "is to recognise that all relationships have power . . . I think we learn it as children. We learn who has power and who doesn't, and how to function within all those relationships. We learn it at such a deep level." This awareness has helped her uncover memories of the ways that power dominated her own family relationships, alienating and isolating her as a child. Similar to Diane, she spent her teenage years living on a farm. Being in the outdoors was a way to escape physical cruelty in her home to find solitude and

healing. She was the only girl in her family and now feels lucky to have gone to a girls' church camp, where she learned that women could live with a freedom, playfulness, and abandon that her mother had not been able to express. She thinks now that she was affirmed and valued there for the first time in her life. Moon relates feminism to her work as an outdoor instructor in more than one way, but most important is the way it shapes her facilitation.

> When I work with a group and I'm in the out of doors [it's] something that helps me to understand my relationship to these people and the relationships of these people to each other. . . . When the group is bopping along and things are going on, there're some clear indications to me of where people are being silenced or . . . being dominated or dominating. It gives me an opportunity to go in there and challenge some of the assumptions that people are making. So, as an outdoor instructor, feminism is integral to my ability to understand what's going on in a group. . . . Feminism has assisted me in having better working relationships with my peers and in making me a better instructor.

My own articulation of a feminism that informs my instructing goes back to learning from my mother as well. Like Terry and Diane, I spent summers at a remote family cottage where I developed "the skills I needed to swim, paddle, navigate, cook on a fire, and sleep under the stars." From my mother's keen spirit of discovery I learned to cope with unexpected crises, such as coming across rattlesnakes. "There is a history of women who took their freedom in the outdoors for granted on both sides of my family." My paternal grandmother was also a strong figure in the family's century-old lodge in the next bay; she gave me my first fishing rod on my birthday. Being in the outdoors taught me to be active, unself-conscious, independent, and capable. Feminism continues to sustain the connection with other capable women for me. "The outdoors gives me that same feeling of the freedom to be who I am. Travelling and learning with other women re-creates an early affirmation [of freedom and autonomy for me], which does not exist when working with men" in the outdoors. Perhaps it is my independence that has created huge tensions for me in work situations.

> I was being undermined, verbally and interpersonally, by men who were supervisors and co workers . . . in public situations [like] staff meetings. I was being put down. I was . . . sometimes discredited by my male students until I proved myself [physically]. But I [always felt that I] couldn't be too hard back.

Embodying Contradictions

One of the most relevant topics which we discussed in our interviews was the representation of competence and how such competence is embodied in instructors

and facilitators, with its connections to strength, technical dexterity, and physical endurance. I present two analyses of our learning here about femininity, strength and power and authority. We see physical ability as linked, for us, to appropriate body use and size, with links to body consciousness, autonomy, self-reliance, and understanding our gendered selves. It became apparent that our bodies, as gendered, were encoded with conflicting meanings in outdoor adventuring, in which it might seem self-evident that the social codes for femininity would have less value. And yet, each of us expressed a self-consciousness linked to our bodies. Terry is a Wen-do instructor,[9] but her worries are that her tall, lithe body may not appear to be capable of doing the work, or inspire confidence. "I am not very big, but I know I'm strong and I'm really proud of that strength." At the same time, she is concerned that perhaps she does not look strong. Although she also hopes that women do not see her as a superwoman (Warren, 1985), or too capable. "I don't know if other people, women in particular, see me as physically strong. I'm not very big, but I know I'm strong. . . . Maybe it's easier for them to say 'oh well, yeah, she can do it, but I can't.'"

Yet a large body, Moon finds, is not allowed value in a woman. She has come to terms with the contexts of preconceived social judgments, in light of what she experiences when she is in the city. "When I go to an Outward Bound meeting or a gathering, I don't look like most of the people there and I'm very self-conscious about that because the context has changed," she says. Students make assumptions about her capabilities and body size.

> I am a big woman. I don't fit the norm of the outdoor wilderness leader because my body shape is different. I carry a lot more weight around. But I also have a powerful body. Learning to love my body is really difficult. My feminism is a kind of resistance, I think, around female sexualization.
>
> What I have to battle with constantly with a group are assumptions on their part that I'm not qualified, because I'm heavy. That "You can't climb. You can't kayak. You're going to be dead weight because you're so big. You're going to slow us down." I have to battle that. So I just quietly go ahead and do what I do and disprove their assumptions about a big woman.
>
> The positive part of it is that I believe that I offer a role model to the students, particularly those students that come that are also big. They see that that's a power, that there are positive things to do and be. I have pride in my body and I use it well. And experience pleasure in it, joy in it. For many students that come that are big, that's not what they experience in their bodies. They experience shame. They experience fear that they're not going to be able to get a climb. I also think too that I role model for those students that are very fat phobic.

Like Moon, I link the affects of my gendered body culture to the context of sexual social relations, that is the sexualisation of the ideal woman in society. It seems like a contradiction to have to be worried about being objectified in the outdoors, when

the maternal is the symbolic feminine, and when the skills which I am instructing or facilitating are supposedly generically practiced. Additionally, in contrast to my earlier years, I tend to feel more self-conscious as an adult, even when active and capable in the outdoors. In fact, in one instructing experience, I was told to be more careful about my clothing and energy around men students so that "they don't fall in love with [me]." I reflect on the reason that my shorts and T-shirt would appear to be any different than the running gear of any other woman staff member, and I wonder if "I was colluding in maintaining a heterosexual attractiveness, pursuing a fit and slim body, wanting to appear competent yet accommodating, not wanting to be labelled negative—too critical, too intense, too feminist—and, most of all, wanting to be liked and accepted into the community."

Diane feels that in contrast to her earlier days training as an outdoor instructor, she is now more in touch with her body. She comments on her body, uncomfortable about her "city fat" and body size "at this point," and mentions a recent work situation in corporate adventure training when she felt unusually self-conscious in front of one or two men participants. "What I always want to go back to is that absolute intensity of feeling in my body, and how good I felt," she says, remembering when she was strong, muscular, fit, and could "go anywhere" in the mountains. "Ohhhh yeah! And, you know—you could just *feel* your muscles!"

Feeling afraid while instructing also arose out of our analysis of body size, physical strength, and femininity. Though apparently contradictory, Terry summarises the feeling that haunts many women in the outdoors (see Millard, 1992):

> I really like Moon's analogy of looking over our shoulders all the time. That really hits home . . . I think I *do* look over my shoulder in the outdoors. [She tells a story of a woman who hid in the woods at the rock site until some drunk fishermen left the area.] That is there still. I wish it wasn't there, I wish it wasn't everywhere, and yet that's something that I am really aware of. . . . You know the potential is there. . . . And how is that [managed] when you are leading a group of Junior Girls, for instance, two female instructors and a group of Junior Girls?

The unpredictability of nature and the cultural behaviours which mean that "the potential" for harm to our students or/and ourselves is always there, causing a Wendo instructor to look over her shoulder "all the time," demand constant negotiation for us as women. We experience this in stark contrast to the notion that the outdoors is a place of freedom and autonomy.

Linked to this theme was not just fear of violence, but preparation for confrontation, which could or could not be physical, with men students. Challenges by men to our authority was a topic in each of our transcripts. Again, Terry's comments offer a synopsis:

> One of the other issues around being female up here that I've noticed is the testing that goes on when there are two female instructors when there are males in the brigade; particularly, males that either think they're older or see themselves as more proficient in some way. I look pretty young for my age, and so it's not unusual to have a younger male think he's older than I am, and just a lot of subtle testing. In my case, it's certainly never been as extreme as, for instance, sexual harassment, although that's something that I certainly am aware of. It's just one of those nuisance things, in terms of "calling" behaviour. It's like working with adolescents and [saying] "Yes, you really have to do this" and "That's not acceptable." So it's an issue. I go in now expecting it. . . . If it does happen, I'm ready for it, in terms of having some ideas of how I'm going to deal with it. And perhaps my partner and I've talked about that beforehand. In fact, I would think, in most cases we have; [we've] decided how we're going to deal with it.

Conclusion

Miranda and Yerkes (1987) find that 90% of respondents among women leaders in the United States indicate that gender influences their work. The 1987 study finds that women leaders surveyed prefer to use the terms "facilitator" or "guide" rather than leader, which was not a specific issue in my conversations. However, it points to the aspect of the work which underwrites this chapter, which is to disengage the notion of outdoor leadership from an abstraction, a fixed, taken-for-granted disembodied authority. Instead of changing the term for the role of leader, we, the women in this study, change the terms of the relationship which inscribes the role, by whatever term, with codes of power. We set the terms to begin with our personal, partial, and contradictory selves. Moon puts it succinctly: "For me it's a question of how we use our power in relationships and groups in the out of doors or doing adventure education." We can never look at "our power" from a static, fixed and impersonal, that is, objective position, just as we cannot look at our selves from outside ourselves.

American women instructors indicate widely varied interpretations of "strategies to respond to the perceived influence" of gender on their work (Miranda & Yerkes, 1987, p. 19). The brief comments offered here give insight into the complexity of what exactly such strategies must contend with. When we set out to give ourselves "voice" or self-representation, we were attempting to construct ourselves as subjects and found that subjectivity is not necessarily coherent, uncomplicated, or in our own control. At times, the women in the study appear to feel strong and clear, perhaps seeing ourselves as positive, non-traditional role models; at other times, we appear to be hurt by judgments made by students or colleagues when our representations of difference may be understood as personal choice and personal deficit. I hear a woman who is tall and lean worry that she will appear too capable to her students, perhaps inhibiting other women. A Wen-Do instructor, she still worries about

travelling the northern fishing routes alone with a group of teenaged girls. I hear a woman who knows she is large and powerful want to convey to others the joys of having pride in one's body, while she contends with students who assume that their instructor is fat and a liability to her group. I hear deeply felt experiences of resistance to norms of passivity and dependence, but also the confusion of finding oneself colluding in the construction of a socially acceptable identity. Decisions such as disclosing our sexual orientation—or even our feminism—in a small community, may not give us any *more* control over our self-representation, and, therefore, they still need to be constantly renegotiated.

It may be that physical capability and strength cannot contribute to deconstructing the many expressions of femininity which cause women to continue "looking over our shoulders all the time . . . in the outdoors," as Moon says. The performance of our skills is in fact a certain disciplining of our bodies in which are embedded the practices that define the competent outdoor instructor, already masculine, Eurocentric, and persuasively proven.

The lived realities of being a woman in the outdoors are expressed in terms of desire for "self": seeing women getting in touch with their strength, questioning what being a woman means, locating her sense of self, and finally "unpacking" her experience. I do not want to risk posing this as a model, an evolutionary design, or even a common aspect to other women's experiences. It emerges in our conversations as a way in which we each come to the practice of "unsettling" our own fixed and certain senses of "self," the practice of feminism. Our aim is always to understand how such shifting social senses of self serve to inhibit our abilities to make the social less limiting for women with whom we work.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank the three women who participated in the Canadian study, and note that they wanted to be known by their own names, not pseudonyms, so as not to make invisible their particular lived realities. I also want to thank the editor and an anonymous reviewer for their insightful and incisive editing of an earlier version of this article.

Endnotes

[1] This is an interview segment that has been edited for clarity for the purposes of this article. The original was recorded for and cited verbatim in an unpublished master's study (Bell, 1993).

[2] These academic disciplines include, first, sociology and cultural studies, second, critical education theory, and third, feminist theory, including epistemology (theory of knowledge) and poststructuralist analyses of identity.

[3] This chapter is not a research report, but rather presents a synthesis of selected themes in relation to current theoretical literature.

[4] By identity, I am not referring to a sense of self as personality, which is more of a psychological construct indicating a unified entity.

[5] Note the use of the terms social and cultural. Social refers to socially endorsed *patterns and routines* that become so embedded in our daily lives that they organise what we do when (such as how we do our banking, participate in rush hour traffic, or undertake pre-season staff training). Social patterns are sometimes called social structures, when they seem so concrete as to give us no option, such as global capitalism or mass media. Social categories are the stratifications which are produced by such structures, such as class, race, gender, and sexuality. Cultural refers to the *ideas* which inform social patterns in specific groups (such as the ideas and rituals which belong to an identity based on ethnicity or an affinity-based subculture). I also use the term sociocultural to refer to acknowledgement that while social structures operate on all of our lives, they do not do so in the same ways, depending on our cultural interpretations and meanings. There will be different cultural meanings about the way that sexual orientation structures social access to outdoor, experiential learning opportunities if one lives in a place in which the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community offering and seeking such experiences is visible or if one lives where members of this community are not visible.

[6] The shortcoming of social role theory is that individual difference is erased as behaviours are seen as immutable, even when it is acknowledged that roles are learned, as demonstrated by Nolan and Priest (1993) in their look at women-only outdoor programs. The solution to role difference is generally a call for androgyny (Knapp, 1985), that is further erasure of difference, which makes it impossible to conceive of social change. How are individual preferences evaluated to be imposed on society's tendencies? There is no adequate explanation for social relations and the structures which operate to privilege dominant interests *despite* our preferences, such as unemployment or homelessness. The promise of the concept of social practices is that it indicates cultural ideas inform skills that must be repeated in order to achieve the desired end, but which can effect different ends if practised differently. If "practice is of the moment" (Cornell, 1987, p. 141), then in the next moment, practices can be altered to accomplish different ends; the examples of fashion, bodily adornment, and depilation come to mind as gendered practices used disparately to convey shifting messages about gender (Bartky, 1990).

[7] While the *specificity of* womanness comes from (rather problematic) notions of a common feminine essence (Spelman, 1988), the *particularity of* a woman's experience locates her knowledge in her personal practices of her gender identity as it might intersect with other important social categories in her life, such as ethnicity, class, sexuality, creed, age, physical challenge, or literacy, among others (Rockhill, 1987a).

[8] The quotes included in the text are from transcripts of individual and group interviews, and are reproduced here verbatim. It is important to note that although discussed as clear topics here, the selected themes presented here were emergent in the research process. The original interview schedule focused on questions of training, certification, professional development, instructor competencies, and future goals. The interviewer did not mention the word feminism until a participant did; the topic was introduced as, "How has being a woman affected your work?"

[9] Wen-do is a form of self-defense for women.

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